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SUBJECT: KENYA TO HOST 2009 AGOA FORUM BETWEEN AUGUST 9-14

REFS: (A) STATE 114398 (B) NAIROBI 2224

11. This cable is not/not for internet distribution.

12. Please See Action Request - Para 15.

13. Summary. Kenya proposes hosting the 2009 AGOA Forum in Nairobi, between August 9-14. The preferred venue is the Kenyatta International Convention Center (KICC) in downtown Nairobi. Deputy Prime Minister-Minister of Trade Uhuru Kenyatta has already established a national organizing committee, headed by the Trade Ministry's Acting Chief Economist Richard Sindiga. As part of an expansive November 11 preparatory meeting with emboffs, Kenyatta and his senior staff requested that a US Mission officer attend its weekly meetings. Emboffs, in fact, attended the organizing committee's November 13 meeting where it was made clear that US Embassy officers would also be part of the subcommittees covering all aspects of the Forum's organization, including security arrangements. Kenyatta said he would also like to hold monthly meetings with the embassy's point person for the 2009 AGOA Forum. Kenyatta asked that the USG promote the participation of the American and African private sectors to ensure that the forum is a success and not merely another talk shop among African ministers. End Summary.

14. As instructed ref A, on November 11, Economic Counselor Eugene Young and Management Counselor Michael Hoza met with Kenyan Deputy Prime Minister-Minister of Trade Uhuru Kenyatta, Assistant Minister of Trade Omino Magara, Acting Chief Economist Richard Sindiga, and Senior Economist David Ngarama to inform the Government of Kenya (GOK) that the United States welcomes and accepts Kenya's invitation to host the 2009 AGOA Forum. D/PM Kenyatta thanked the USG, acknowledged our October 29 diplomatic note indicating the United States' acceptance of Kenya's offer to host was "very well received," and said his government wants to work closely with Washington and the US Mission in the lead up to the event. He told emboffs that Kenya has already formed a national organizing committee composed of stakeholders from government, the private sector, and civil society. Headed by the Trade Ministry's Acting Chief Economist Richard Sindiga, the national organizing committee will hold weekly meetings. It has already formed various sub-committees to deal with specific matters such as the forum's theme and agenda, venue, accreditation, finance and procurement, accommodations, transport, security, publicity, and

hospitality/protocol. Sub-committees for private sector and NGO involvement have also been established.

¶15. Sindiga said the GOK would welcome the presence of an American officer on the organizing committee to serve as a liaison. D/PM Kenyatta furthermore recommended that embassy's point person for the 2009 AGOA Forum (ECON/C Young) to join him for monthly meetings to take stock of ongoing preparations. Kenyatta revealed that he had just signed a memorandum on the event, which is to be submitted to the Cabinet for approval. It includes a request for funds. Once the Cabinet approves the memorandum, a mere formality according to Kenyatta, the GOK will make a public announcement that it will host the 2009 AGOA Forum.

¶16. Emboffs complimented the Kenyans for moving quickly on forum preparations. ECON/C Young emphasized that this will be the biggest U.S.-Africa event in 2009. Young said there would likely be a USG delegation numbering 150, including several Cabinet members. Should the forum be held in August, when the US Congress is in recess, several members of Congress might participate. He told Kenyatta that the USG would prefer that the forum take place in late July-early August. Kenyatta responded that the Kenyans initially considered holding the forum in mid-July, but said the American-suggested timeframe, perhaps the first week of August, would be fine. Sindiga added that the additional time would be a benefit and a later date - after the annual budget is presented to Parliament on June 14 - would likely ensure that the FY10 budget earmarks funding for the forum. By early August Parliament would be in recess, thus allowing MPs to attend.

¶17. In an email subsequent to the meeting, Sindiga informed MGT/C Hoza that Kenya proposes holding the 2009 AGOA Forum within the August 9-14 window.

¶18. With respect to other logistical questions raised by emboffs, notably dealing with security and venue, the Kenyans asked that embassy officials liaise with the Sub-Committee on Security, chaired by the Ministry of Internal Security and the Police Department. Sindiga explained that the Trade Ministry would rely on the security sub-committee and the police to handle all security matters related to forum dignitaries and delegates.

¶19. The Kenyans said the venue would be the Kenyatta International Convention Center (KICC) in downtown Nairobi, convenient to six major hotels. Other venues, among them the Safari Park Hotel and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) compound, D/PM Kenyatta averred, would involve more across-town transportation hassles and preclude the possibility of holding a trade fair at the same location as the conference. That events were not held at a central location in Accra, he pointed out, was a difficulty at the 2007 AGOA Forum.

¶10. Kenyatta reiterated emphatically that Kenya is determined to make the 2009 affair a tremendous success - one which serves to take full advantage of the AGOA trade regime by bringing American and African buyers and sellers together. Kenyatta emphasized that the annual gathering should be much more than yet another talkfest among African and American government ministers and their staffs. In his opinion, the forum can only be judged a success if there is broad private sector participation. He urged the US Embassy to spread the word about the 2009 AGOA Forum to sister embassies in Africa and to encourage American and African businesses to send representatives and set up trade fair booths. "It has to be the most successful AGOA Forum ever held!" Kenyatta exclaimed.

¶11. As a way of recruiting broad business participation, ECON/C Young and MGT/C Hoza suggested to the Kenyans that they consider waiving various customs, duties, and storage charges on goods, wares, and equipment to be displayed at the trade fair. Kenya Customs must also be prepared to help expedite clearances so these products arrive on time. They underscored that streamlining the process for all participants in the trade fair - not just Americans - would help ensure that it is indeed a success. (Comment: we were pleasantly surprised when Sindiga raised this matter at the November 13 organizing committee meeting, saying that Ministry of Trade officials must approach the Finance Ministry, Kenya Revenue Authority, and Customs Service to make sure that duty waivers are secured well ahead of the forum. End Comment.)

¶12. At the November 13 national organizing committee meeting, the Kenyans estimated the forum would attract 700 delegates from 43 countries. They are anticipating each country will send at least three ministers. Sindiga, half in jest, recommended that the sub-committees make contingency plans in case several heads of state take part, which he predicted would happen "if our son of Kenya, the next President of the United States attends." Early budget figures were laid out: the GOK expects the forum will cost a minimum \$1M, with half that amount covering conference expenses. Sindiga announced that his Ministry of Trade colleagues are working on a proposed theme and agenda, which they intend to circulate to the resident African embassies and the US Mission within the next week. Sindiga and the sub-committee heads, notably the one in charge of security, heartily accepted emboffs' request that US Mission officers be named to several of the organizing sub-committees.

¶13. Per ref A request, Embassy Nairobi will submit an estimate of USG resources required to ensure a successful 2009 AGOA Forum once our MGT and GSO staffs have an opportunity to sit in on sub-committee meetings dealing with accreditation, accommodation, transportation, and other logistical matters.

¶14. Contact information for the chief Kenyan POC, Richard Sindiga, is as follows:

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¶15. Comment and Action Request: The GOK has enthusiastically embraced the 2009 AGOA Forum. Their preparation to date is encouraging as is their willingness to engage with us from the start. We look forward to early interaction with the Inter-Agency Working Group in Washington, perhaps via DVC to kick off our work. Action Request: Please confirm Washington's acceptance of the August 9-14 timeframe as soon as possible.

Ranneberger